

YEO RESIGNS!

Tim Yeo, director of The Spastics Society, has resigned.

Under the terms of his contract, he has given six months' notice which means he will go in December. He came in October 1980.

Yeo has made no secret of the fact that if he was elected to Parliament he would leave. His victory in South Suffolk last week has made that intention a reality. As the Conservative candidate he polled 24,469, 11,269 ahead of his nearest rival, a Liberal.

In Parliament, will he become The Society's lobbyist? "I shall do whatever I can to further its interests, and I shall certainly hope to put The Society's point of view, where I agree with it. At the moment, of course, I do. But perhaps there will be new policies for which I couldn't lobby."

His unusual background could, he thinks, give him modest influence in social policies, but he's not counting on it. "I'm starting at the bottom," he said.

Other areas of interest, apart from his constituency, are industry, the economy, and Third World affairs.

In the field of disability,

ment, he named several policies he thinks the Government should now follow. "They should devote more attention to prevention in the National Health Service. Resources should be allocated for the 1981 Education Act; it won't work unless they are. All disabled youngsters should be entitled to further education up to the age of 19. I shall press for all those."

He supports the Conservative policy, "Care in the Community." "It should be implemented more quickly in regard to long-stay hospitals, and we should look at how to give local authorities resources to implement it."

"I am keeping an open mind on anti-discrimination legislation and waiting to see what research in the field will bring forth."

He hopes his successor will be able to inspire

both staff and volunteers to work enthusiastically for The Society. "A financial background was valuable to me, but we have a better system now. I hope the lesson has been learned that large voluntary organisations need someone with managerial qualities. Knowledge of handicap alone is not enough."

The job is open to people inside as well as outside The Society. A firm of management consultants will select candidates for interview by a sub-committee of the Executive Council, comprising four honorary officers and one member of the Executive Council. The Executive Council will then interview the short-listed candidates and appoint a director.

Given The Society's high profile, there will be a fair amount of interest, thinks Tim Yeo. "It's not a conventional job."

Parliament's gain —



— The Society's loss



Jack Blake

'What you need is a horn!'

ALICE AT CHELSEA

Around 240,000 people visit the Chelsea Flower Show every year. Alice Moira has never been. "We need escorts to go everywhere. That's why we don't go — that's the reality."

Alice has been in a wheelchair since childhood. She insisted on surgery at 14, but it failed. Undeterred, she went on to take a degree in sociology at London University and to practise as a qualified social worker in Nottingham. Now she has joined The Society as a researcher with special interest in employment.

She was delighted at the idea of casing the Flower Show. "I'm not my father's daughter for nothing!" (Alex Moira, a founder member of The Society, is an enthusiastic gardener).

We arrived on Thursday morning at 10.30 am. It would have been better to start earlier or towards the end of the afternoon.

What is more, from Thursday afternoon at 3.30 pm, through Friday, ticket prices drop to £4.50. (Helpers go in free).

Alice came by minicab bringing a folding, manually-operated wheelchair. She could have used one of the 25 free wheelchairs at the main gates, but they should be ordered before the show opens.

She tried getting up the hill from the Embankment entrance to the Marquee by herself, but had to be helped. In the Marquee the going was rough. "You would need large wheels and power to get round on your own."

Her inexperienced helper kept barking people's shins with the corner of the chair. "What you need is a horn!" said one visitor — but she was smiling. In fact we got smiles all the way and people stood aside to let Alice pass.

Outside we trundled

Continued on page 7

What will the Tories do for Disabled People?

Spastics News looks at the Conservative Manifesto and the record

"We have a duty to protect the most vulnerable members of our society" declared Margaret Thatcher in her introduction to the Conservative Manifesto 1983, and the point was reiterated in the aims of the Party — "to build a responsible society which protects the weak but also allows the family and the individual to flourish."

However, nothing's free. "Only if we create wealth," said Mrs Thatcher, "can we continue to do justice to the old and the sick and the disabled. It is economic success which will provide the surest guarantee of help for those who need it most."

What are the Conservatives planning to do in key areas of interest to disabled people?

Pensions and Benefits

1. "In the next Parliament, we shall continue to protect retirement pensions and other linked long-term benefits against rising prices."

Comment: The link with average earnings — or prices, whichever was higher — was abolished in 1980 by the Conservative government.

2. "Supplementary benefits... have been raised ahead of prices... the Government has also raised the amount of savings people can keep without losing any supplementary benefit."

Comment: The new limit is only £2,500; for single payments, £500. This causes problems for people with trust funds, redundancy or compensation payments, and for elderly people saving for their funerals.

3. "Expenditure on cash benefits to the disabled is 21 per cent higher than under Labour, even after allowing for rising prices. There has been extra help too, for those who are least able to afford their fuel bills."

Comment: A welcome rise in cash benefits, since 74 per cent of elderly, and 40 per cent of non-elderly people with disabilities were living on or around SB level in 1979 compared to 21 per cent of the total population.

Continued on page 11

Disappointments

Last Friday was a sad day for John Tizard, The Society's Adviser on Statutory Resources, and for David Hanson, Regional Officer for the North West. Both were unsuccessful Labour candidates.

At Eddisbury, an eight per cent Tory swing plus a strong Alliance vote cut David's estimated support by nearly a half. "We are very disappointed with the results," he said.

In Mid-Bedfordshire, it was a similar story. "No constituency is an island," said John Tizard. "In the last days there was a collapse of the Labour vote. People were persuaded, falsely, that the effective way to vote against the Conservatives was to vote Alliance." He felt sore about the media's assurances that the Labour Party was finished, and about the power of opinion

polls to divert voters' attention away from the issues.

For both candidates, it was back to work on Monday. As David put it, "The Spastics Society has got me for another five years!"

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Avoiding Teignmouth situations takes money

I have been disturbed to learn of several complaints about holidays that have been received by Mrs Ann Hithersay. Perhaps I can put into perspective the worries that are in many people's minds.

Three years ago my department, Recreational Services, was made redundant due to the financial recession. This meant that unless alternative arrangements could be made, The Society would no longer be able to provide much-needed holiday relief for both young spastic adults and their parents.

Unfortunately, other organisations providing holidays for the handicapped were being similarly affected, and so, on my own initiative, I decided to approach a commercial tour operator. Terry Reynolds, the proprietor of Chalfont Line Holidays, kindly agreed to take over our holiday programme for 1980. We agreed to subsidise half the cost of the helpers.

High price?

The main criticism we have received concerns the price now being charged.

It should be remembered that the cost of providing the holidays when they were totally run by The Spastics Society amounted to around £30,000 a year, which included all the administrative costs and all the costs of providing the necessary helpers free of charge to holidaymakers. One cannot expect a commercial firm to absorb these costs and not pass them on to the consumer.

The recent appalling situation at Teignmouth highlights the reason why the Chalfont Line has had to increase its costs in order to take care that the necessary number of helpers is available.

Experience

Most of the helpers on Chalfont Line holidays are chosen by the handicapped themselves. Sometimes, however, helpers have to be found. Although great care is taken, people accustomed to dealing with the severely handicapped are not the easiest to find. To ensure the best possible safety precautions, the Chalfont Line includes a fully qualified nurse on overseas holidays.

Holiday Fund

I have been instrumental in forming a new charity known as the IYDP Holiday Fund to improve the

situation by providing money for helpers. Although we have had great help from Thomsons Holidays and others, our funds are not a bottomless pit. In fact, they are pitiful compared with the £105,000 which the Minister for the Disabled has just given for helpers at one holiday resort, Teignmouth.

No Funds

The International Year of Disabled People has made people aware of the problems of the disabled. Unhappily, it has not been backed up by sufficient funds to enable proper remedial action to be taken, particularly on much-needed holidays.

W. M. C. Hargreaves, MBE,
Wembley, Middx.

Margaret Morgan says thank you — but not goodbye

I would like to take this opportunity, through the columns of *Spastics News*, to thank everyone very much indeed for their kindness and generosity when I retired at the end of April.

I was quite overwhelmed by the number of cards, letters, flowers and gifts that I received both for my 61st birthday and for my retirement — which coincided!

I now have some beautiful — and useful — new possessions in my home which I should have more time both to enjoy myself and to share with other people.

I shall miss the direct contact with everyone, but I am looking forward to keeping in touch through the columns of *Spastics News*.

With my sincere thanks and good wishes to everyone.

Margaret Morgan,
London NW3.

Full steam ahead

On April 24 a party of 12 from Kingston Adult Unit went to visit The Watercress Line in Hampshire.

Everyone said afterwards how much we had enjoyed the day because we had a return ride on a steam train adapted to take wheelchairs, and a fork-lift truck was there to lift people in wheelchairs to see in the engine shed.

Also a blind man in our group was taken to feel all over the train by one of the railway's helpers. As he is a steam enthusiast, this was a rare treat.

The Director's Column

Margaret Murray



High on the campaign trail

Since starting to contribute a column to *Spastics News*, I have found myself dictating the copy in a variety of places — on railway trains, in dull meetings which required my presence but not my attention, and so on. This is the first, and presumably the last, time I shall write it from the hustings.

It is nine years since I fought a General Election campaign and I had forgotten just how chaotic life becomes. Once the campaign is underway, candidates are swept along from one event to the next with scarcely a pause for breath.

In my case, the problem is exacerbated by the shape of my constituency,

South Suffolk, which is a long thin strip, 40 miles from east to west, with relatively poor roads. There are some 50 towns and villages in which I am expected to make a personal appearance, so the programme is very full.

A typical day starts with a rudimentary glance through the newspapers over breakfast and about 10 minutes with a large pile of mail. The mail can be roughly divided into three categories.

First, there is a pile of briefings which arrive every day from Party Headquarters. All one can do is glance at the index to see if they deal with issues which are being raised on the doorstep or at public meetings. I was glad to see that one of the first policy guides for all Conservative candidates was on VAT relief for charities.

Issues

The second category consists of letters from constituents who wish to learn the views of their candidate, or who have a problem. The issues which crop up most in South Suffolk are blood sports, pensions, schools and local transport. This category of letters needs to be answered.

The third category consists of Round Robin letters, circulars and ques-

tionnaires from pressure groups and organisations. Unless these deal with an issue of importance in the constituency, or are personally signed by a constituent, they can be safely ignored. I have no illusions about the influence which a new backbencher can expect to exercise over the Government (except where the Member is regarded as expert).

Having raced through these daily duties, we set off on the campaign trail, usually around 9 am in a blue car equipped with loudspeakers and posters.

Volunteers accompany me each day, and we dash from village to village and town to town. We descend upon housing estates, and immediately the advance guard starts knocking on doors and ringing bells and I leap from doorstep to doorstep, jumping flowerbeds and walls in order to save time. An election campaign is one of the most sophisticated aids to slimming that has yet been invented.

A mid-day break for a pub lunch, and we continue through the afternoon until about 5.30 pm or 6 pm, when we return to base for the only real opportunity to relax, before setting out for the evening meetings.

By the time this column is printed, the results will be known, and so there is

no point in my commenting on the political progress of the campaign.

But I am rather disappointed that disability has figured so little. Although all our open meetings have been held in halls or rooms which are accessible, not a single disabled person has attended, nor has any question relating to disability been asked. Even on the doorstep or in the street, disability has been raised by only a handful of people.

Lessons

Also, apart from the well-produced Spastic Society leaflet which puts questions to party candidates, no other organisation representing disabled people seems to have made any attempt to contact candidates. Bearing in mind the very large number of disabled people who are entitled to vote, lobbying has not been as effective as it could have been. There are lessons to learn between now and the next General Election.

There, I am afraid, we must leave it for this month. The next event in the campaign calendar has arrived and demands immediate attention!

Tim X



Anyone nostalgic for the age of steam?

The day was a great success because of the Watercress Line's willingness to help, and I would recommend the railway to any other groups wanting an interesting and unusual day trip.

Ian Lindsay,
Kingston Adult Unit,
Surrey.

The Mid-Hants Railway, also known as The Watercress Line, due to its picturesque route through England's largest watercress beds, is one of the few preserved steam railways still operating in Britain.

Trains run between Alresford and Medstead every day except Friday during August, and on

weekends and Bank Holidays from March to the end of October. During the season there are special events such as the Teddy Bear's Special, a Great Steam Happening, and Hallowe'en and Fireworks, and over Christmas there are Santa Specials to visit Santa in his grotto.

New facilities for the disabled were launched the day of the Kingston Unit's visit. Although the fork-lift truck was on special loan that day, the railway carriage adapted for wheelchair passengers and their companions is available throughout the year.

Disabled visitors are welcome on all trips, but each is asked to bring a helper to assist with getting on and off trains. Refresh-

ments are available. The toilets at Ropley, the half-way point on the line, have been adapted for disabled people. Parties of 20 or more are eligible for a discount, but they should book at least two weeks in advance.

Time-tables, information and booking forms from the General Manager, Mid-Hants Railway, Alresford Station, Alresford, Hants SO24 9JG. (Telephone 096273 3810.)

Editor

If you would like to express your views, agree or disagree, complain (or praise!), write to the Editor, *Spastics News*, 12 Park Crescent, London W1N 4EQ.

Drug name misprint

The drug **LIORESAL**, which was referred to in my letter published in last month's *Spastics News*, appeared incorrectly as **IDORESAL**, which does not exist as far as I know.

Would you be so kind as to print **LIORESAL** correctly in next month's issue? Alas, that means another delay until we get some information for our survey. The purpose of the survey is to find out if there have been any more "Opren-type" drastically bad results from Lioresal, since we know of a few, though other people seem to flourish on it. Results include complete paralysis, including throat muscles, with a 9/12-week recovery period after instant stoppage of the drug.

We thought we might get out some sort of warning if any more cases were reported to us; we also want to know, very roughly, how many people are benefiting from Lioresal.

Many thanks and welcome to *Spastics News*.
Dr B. M. Hamilton,
7 Fulbrooke Road,
Cambridge
CB3 9EE.

Apologies — Editor

Corrections

We apologise for the following mistakes in the May issue:

Sir Peter Tizard's name was incorrect.

Pontins holidaymakers raised £12,000, not £2,000.

Housing for the Handicapped and Elderly

Two views of a national conference organised by Bulmershe Resource Centre for the Handicapped, held at Reading on May 23

'Responding to a new market'

My first impression was of socially concerned housing developers and benevolent building societies responding to a newly discovered market: the elderly and disabled. There is no shortage, for example, of mutually attractive schemes whereby an elderly person who owns a large, old, but valuable, house can exchange it for a smaller, modern house or flat, and cash to invest.

There were, however, a few dissenting voices. It was said that the private developer's much loved green field sites would isolate elderly people; smaller sites within existing built-up areas would offer better community contacts and services. Furthermore, too many elderly people concentrated in one area could put an unacceptable strain on support services which are already over-stretched, and everyone would suffer.

The problem remains of how to include within a developer's tight budget the extra space and related provisions necessary for elderly and disabled home buyers. One answer can be found in Peterborough, where a coalition of imaginative planners, committed builders and a co-operative housing authority promises a steady supply

of individually adapted houses throughout the city. By ignoring Ministry advice but following the letter of the law, the Peterborough Housing Authority arranges home improvement grants for houses under construction. This reduces time and costs and enables a new house to be adapted as it is built to suit a committed buyer.

As the day went on, a less unified picture emerged. We were reminded of how large numbers of elderly and disabled people live in rented property; of the implications of cuts in private and public house building; of the lack of money for private mortgages or grants.

Everyone welcomed the increased availability and range of housing improvement grants which are seen by those in need as theirs of right rather than a hand-out from Social Services.

We were reminded of how few elderly people now live in residential care. Both for practical reasons and for the general health of elderly and disabled people, it must be made possible for them to go on living in the community, even in their own home.

The inevitable question arose, why aren't all new houses accessible to disabled and elderly visitors, and easily adaptable for

increasing age or unexpected disablement? No real answer was given. British Standard 5619 was prepared with the help of private housebuilders. If it had been implemented nationally in 1978, by now we would have a good stock of appropriate housing.

Other interesting points included the disability of mixed developments — both people and providers — and of subsidising corner shops. We were warned that effective community services may prove more expensive than institutional services. But pioneering schemes, like the one at Oxford, which combines community care with a resource centre offering assessment, rehabilitation, short stay and so on, show that a balance can be

achieved between independent living and desired support.

A practising architect who has multiple sclerosis spoke movingly of finding himself a prisoner in his own house. It was a fitting comment on so much of our new but substandard housing, and a warning to those who would trust the private sector to solve all our problems unaided and unrestricted.

Stephen Thorpe, consultant architect to The Spastics Society.

'A missed opportunity'

The Conference was a curious mix of social policy advisers, housing finance experts and private housing developers.



Reprinted courtesy of the Centre on Environment for the Handicapped.

The programme was intensive — 14 speakers in a day which started at 9.30 am and ended at 6 pm. Unfortunately the speakers were not grouped by interest which made it rather difficult to follow the sessions. Also, there seemed little chance to pick up points which previous speakers had made because only 1 hour and 40 minutes were allotted on the programme to discussion from the floor.

Innovative schemes such as those at Elmbridge or Peterborough were received with an air of complacency. Whilst welcoming these kind of schemes, we must realise that they are, sadly, the exception rather than the rule.

Overall, I felt that the Conference was a missed opportunity to talk about some of the real problems which so many elderly and disabled people face in the housing market. For example, very little was said about substandard housing, limited income or fuel poverty. It would have been more useful to talk about the difficulties of repairs and adaptations for existing homes. There was a heavy concentration on mortgage annuities and home income plans which are out of reach for many disabled and elderly people on low incomes.

Whilst "lip service" was paid to the concept of choice, there was scant

mention of allowing those who want to "stay put" to improve their living conditions.

Even from a "lay person's" point of view, it seemed simplistic to talk about special needs housing simply in terms of low switches and wide doorways. David Hobman from Age Concern gave the most penetrating view of how services such as corner shops also play a part in meeting housing needs.

It is not enough to talk about special schemes, even integrated housing schemes when many disabled people live with able-bodied families. How can we satisfy the needs of everyone?

I was disappointed that the Director General of the National House Building Council did not seem to appreciate the urgency of building all new housing to certain basic standards so as to promote the fuller integration of disabled people.

Nevertheless, the Conference provided a rare occasion for private developers to come and discuss the needs of elderly and disabled people. And I came away with an extremely useful and interesting speakers' pack which for me made the day worthwhile.

Amanda Jordan, lobbyist, The Spastics Society

IDENTITY CRISIS

Integration doesn't apply if you can't sign on the dotted line...

Your signature proves that you are the person you say you are. So what happens when you don't have a signature?

Rodney Seville, of the Hereward College of Further Education for the Disabled in Coventry, meets this problem all the time. "Many of my spastic students are academically bright and they are being trained to live independent lives. But they are so severely disabled that they cannot write. They often use a toe or 'head plonk' to transfer information to paper."

Having at least gained some independence, and living away from home for the first time, the students find it demeaning to be accompanied to the bank by someone who must sign on their behalf before they can withdraw money from their own accounts.

In fact, the problem is two-fold. First, how to withdraw money from the local bank. Second, how to shop, travel, or buy through mail order when one is unknown and a signature customarily seals the transaction.

Barclays, Lloyds, The Midland and National Westminster regard the opening and controlling of an account as a branch decision.

"You really cannot run a bank account without a controlling signature," explained Donat O'Donnell of NatWest. "If a person is incapable of signing, then authority has to be given to another person to sign on his account."

Sometimes an "X" or other distinguishing mark which has been witnessed is acceptable at a bank where a customer is known.

All four banks pointed out that a signature is crucial because it both safeguards the account from fraud and provides proof of identity and credit worthiness.

The Trustee Savings Bank, which has a long history as a social service institution, does provide for a disabled person to open an account and to use a mark which is then witnessed by a matron, a doctor or a bank manager.

But even sympathetic retailers like Marks and Spencer require a signature

The Post Office Customer Service Information Department said that its hands are tied. "The Post Office is really acting as an agent for a great number of different organisations, each with a different policy."

Brian Shayer, editor of "Security Gazette", has had

experience of disabled people.

"What you have to remember," he said bluntly, "is that 99 per cent of the population don't have this problem and business companies are reluctant to help the 1 per cent. If one bank took the first step, others would follow suit. Eventually it will be possible to quote a number which is then processed. But that day is far off."

Meanwhile, he felt that more could be done by personalising names with

a photographic identity card, signed by someone else if necessary. The Home Office is pressing the banks to accept this very method. In the United States, where fraud losses have been unacceptably high, photo-identity cards are now commonplace.

Patrick Fraser of the Banking Information Service explained that the banks have already helped blind people by providing statements in braille and templates to help them write out and sign their

Ray Christopher



We have the technology — but don't bank on it!

cheques. The problem of someone having no signature was new to him.

"The answer," he thinks, "will be what is called 'electronic funds transfer' at the point of sale. This provides a credit card where the personal identification number is tapped in, but it is not yet a reality except for a few garages in Scotland where BP and Clydesdale Bank have got together."

In fact, there is a plan to provide a countrywide network of electronic terminals for payment at the counter by plastic card. The clearing banks and retailers are currently at loggerheads over who should pay the bill, estimated in millions of pounds. A decision is expected this summer. If the plan goes ahead, the first terminals could be in the shops by 1985.

Meanwhile, how do people with cerebral palsy manage?

Marianne West, receptionist at The Society's Assessment Centre in Fitzroy Square, is philosophical. "There is no golden rule. If you are intelligent, you should be able to find a way round the problem. Of course, at 18 or 19, you don't have the same confidence."

Marianne is ataxic and

suffers from poor balance. "I take my time and write my cheque in advance. But if the cashier who knows me is not there, then the pressure begins to build up and I feel terribly guilty as people queue up behind me. In shops I give my Access card. When I am in Marks and Spencer and see something I simply must have, I spend time looking for the quietest counter."

Marianne doesn't like Cashpoints or Autobanks, because she is afraid someone may snatch the money while she is fumbling with her purse.

Jim Howell who lives in Cornwall, is unable to write at all. A friendly bank manager arranged for him to have a cheque book.

"What I do is make an 'X' on the cheque and then take it to the local bank to have it made out and witnessed. When I go to London I have several cheques witnessed which I cash at a bank in Fleet Street where I am known."

Thus thousands of handicapped people use their initiative in order to lead as normal lives as possible.

Yet the technology exists to help them. It is up to the clearing banks and the retailers to decide if and when it will be used.

Ann Potter

You sit down, I'll do it" — girl in a wheelchair

Maggi Barwick, disabled herself, reports on a different kind of course for disabled people

Living in a flat, doing your own cleaning or shopping, is a big step for a handicapped person who has been looked after at home or in a residential centre. To some, it seems like "a castle in the air."

Marian Bowen and I (Marian is an ex-Recreational Officer of The Society) decided that a really basic course was needed in home and personal management. It would help handicapped people to find out what they could do, and even if they were too handicapped to live alone, it would stretch the limits of their independence and encourage them to decide what help they really needed.

Out of these aims came "Getting it together," a residential course held during Easter week at Westbrook School, Long Eaton, Derbyshire. Nine handicapped people lived with seven staff and volunteers, "learning by doing." We all cleaned and tidied, planned meals, went shopping, cooked — and washed up. There was a range of handicaps, with Marian and I about in the middle of the physical ability range. Marian has spina bifida and is in a wheelchair. I had polio as a child and walk with a stick.

Although we planned the course for people in their late teens and early twenties, we discovered adventurous, older people (some of them living in our residential units) who wanted to see if they could branch out into something new. So when we recruited our four volunteers, we managed to reflect the age range. We had the muscle and skills of Eddie Stanley, whose first week of early retirement was probably more strenuous than his previous years at the DHSS. And we had three 16/18-year-olds. All had limited experience of working with handicapped people.

The linch-pin of the operation was Anne O'Connell, the tireless Australian occupational therapist from Fitzroy Square Centre, who organised activities and recommended aids.

The important thing about having inexperienced but energetic teenage volunteers was that they shared their inexperience with members of the course. Everybody had to learn things for the first time. This made for extreme hilarity (we had some very interesting cakes) and also for weariness, as the helpers along with the people on the



Who is going to buy what, when and where? Paul, Eddie, Hayley, Maggi, Debbie, Marian, Caroline and Andrew are all involved in the decision-making.

course learnt how to pace themselves.

It is important for a handicapped person to learn to recognise weariness in a helper and not to make unreasonable demands. If you have only limited use of your own arms and legs and spend most of your time in a wheelchair, you have no conception of how tired somebody can get walking and pushing and lifting: the experience is outside your scope. It was helpful that Marian and I, being disabled, could have a foot in both camps.

I remember at the end of a long day, shopping in a hailstorm in Nottingham, we all sat down at the end of our meal feeling exhausted, no one making a move to do the washing-up. Finally a helper started to get up. She was told by someone in a wheelchair: "No, sit down. I'll do it. You're probably far more tired than I am." After that it wasn't unusual to see a group of "helpers" sitting down being offered coffee and sympathy.

What else did we do on the course? We washed and ironed, and cleaned

the floors and the loos (not a popular job, but how faithful a couple of chaps were at making sure it was done). We went swimming in the magnificent pool and did keep fit, and played wheelchair hockey. We spent a delightful evening at the Theatre Royal in Nottingham seeing Hobson's Choice. The theatre is completely accessible to 12 people in wheelchairs — and so is the bar.

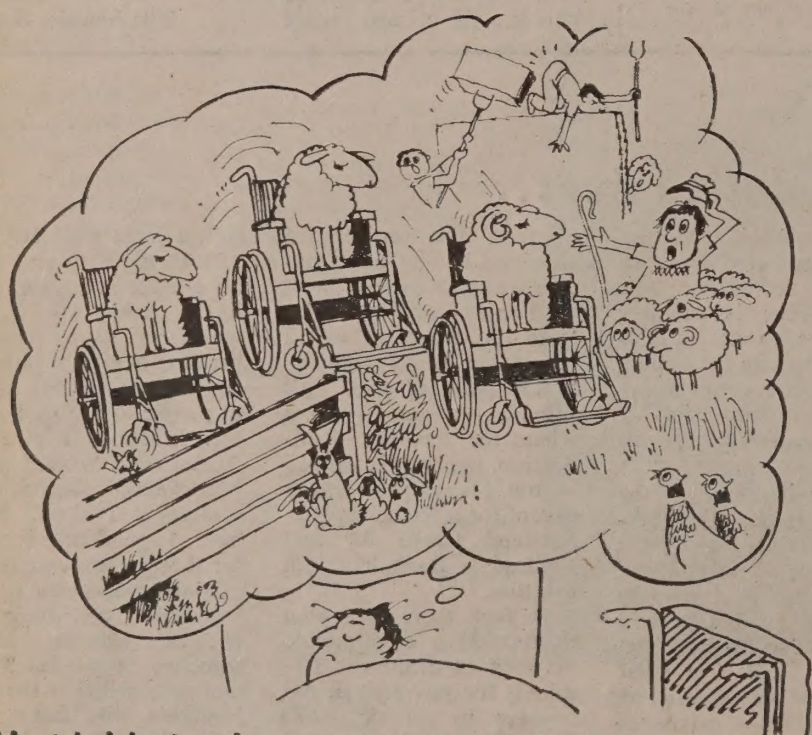
On the last evening we had a Grande Finale dinner party to which several occasional helpers were invited. We had a four-

course meal accompanied by several bottles of Maggi's elderflower wine.

One visitor during the week was the Midlands Senior Regional Officer Gordon Davies, who came with his wife and children to deliver the Region's video equipment which was generously loaned to us for the week. It enabled people to see how they did things like making beds, and produced great improvements. Noran Aids came to give us a demonstration and were extremely helpful. Several people found that simple, inexpensive aids like a suction pad eggcup or a rocker-knife added quite disproportionately to their independence. Cherry Hambrook, Careers Advisory Officer, gave us valuable advice and information.

By the end of the week the people who had "got it together" had learned a great deal about themselves, their abilities and their needs. More important than physical independence, they had learned self-determination: the ability to know what you yourself want, and to find ways of organising your life to achieve it.

Maggi Barwick is Social Work Co-ordinator for The Spastics Society in the Midlands and Eastern Regions.



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Need a break?

Parents of severely handicapped children need a break sometimes. They should be able to go on holiday knowing that their child is in friendly surroundings.

But statutory provision for short-term care is limited, and often confined to unsuitable wards in long-stay hospitals.

The Family Help Unit at Bury St Edmunds, run by The Spastics Society, offers parents an alternative. Up to 16 multiply-handicapped children (not necessarily with cerebral palsy) can spend evenings, weekends, or a holiday in a homely atmosphere.

At Open Day on May 26, senior members of local authority social services departments came to see for themselves the work

of the unit. Their support is essential. Although local groups do sponsor children, the brunt must lie with local authorities.

For further information

about the unit, contact Mrs M. Cresswell, Sister-in-charge, East Anglia Family Help Unit, Shakers Lane, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk (telephone: (0284) 3957).

Ian Hulland



Soyna Podd holds Angus Reid's finger (he is Director of Finance, The Spastics Society) and blows bubbles. She is watched by Joan Martin, Chairman, Essex Social Services Committee; and by Dr Charles Cope, Kettering Health Authority.



On the mat — June Chamberlain, Social Services Adviser, Tower Hamlets, holds Hayley Giles. Margaret Cresswell, Sister-in-charge of the unit, sits behind Brett Lee, and Tim Yeo cracks a joke with Sam Gow, Assistant Director, Tower Hamlets Social Services, who is holding Zoe Zygadoo.

INTERNATIONAL

Derek Lancaster-Gaye continues his fact-finding tour in the Far East

VIET NAM

Where love is not enough

I have just returned from Viet Nam. It is not a place about which one had much information.

Even Whitaker's Almanac, normally a generous source of information in these matters, had little to say. Viet Nam has a population of around 50 million in a country much the same size as the United Kingdom. It stretches over 1,000 miles from north to south, from Ha Noi to Ho Chi Minhville, and has extended borders with China, Cambodia and Laos. It has been a socialist republic since 1976 when North and South were unified.

These were the bare facts which gave no conception of what I was to find in this country of contradictions. But now I was an official guest of the government, and provided with an all too rare motor vehicle, driver and interpreter, I embarked on a programme of visits and discussions to assess just how the severely disabled and their families cope.

Perhaps I did not appreciate that the Viet Nameese had known little other than a state of war for the past 30 years or more, that it was a nation that had successfully defeated the French, the Americans and the Chinese and, for reasons that still remain unclear to me, it is a nation now engaged in conflict the whole length of its borders. I was concerned

solely with the problems of disability, but at times it was impossible to ignore the results of conflict.

Viet Nam is isolated politically and economically. It is a nation proud but poor, deprived of the knowledge required to deal with the problems of handicap and of the opportunity to secure that knowledge, and denied the materials and resources with which to solve these problems.

Its people live and work in the countryside.

Transportation is hazardous relying on bus and bicycle. Despite the almost total absence of motor cars, private ownership of which is not permitted even if there were petrol enough for such a luxury, urban bicycle traffic jams are commonplace.

Viet Nam is among the poorest 20 countries in the world and likely to remain so. Funds are simply not available for social development projects. Overseas aid, even from friendly nations such as Russia and Cuba, is limited. It is not surprising therefore, that rehabilitation has no priority.

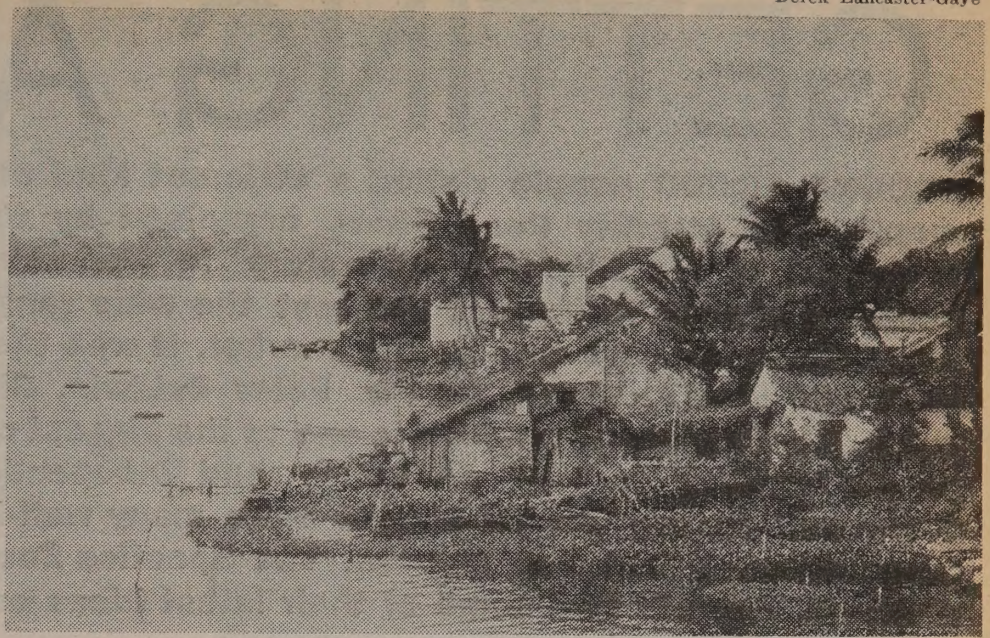
Lack of knowledge about cerebral palsy makes early diagnosis and treatment almost impossible. Medical services are limited; hospital facilities lacking in so many features we take for granted; therapists unavailable; and

such treatment as is provided for those who are able to reach the medical centre seems confined to simple passive therapy and acupuncture. I was told, often, that cerebral palsy and other severe disabilities were conditions too difficult to deal with, and so little is done for parents.

In fact I saw very few cerebral palsy cases. Children or adults are kept at home with only love to sustain them. My guess is that the prevalence rate must be twice that of the United Kingdom.

The CP child receives no education unless his disability is very mild and then, of course, he is not regarded as disabled at all. Nor does the CP adult receive any opportunity for employment, and this in a country which claims almost full employment.

All disabled people suffer from the country's economic isolation. Prostheses are not generally available as supplies of hardening agent for fibreglass have become exhausted. Wheelchair manufacture is halted for lack of ball bearings. The knitting machines of the blind workers are silent for lack of wool and the traditional embroidery carried on by deaf people is limited for lack of satin material. The list of shortages is endless and an almost total absence of basic aids tops the list.



A cerebral-palsied young man in rural North Viet Nam. For him, it's a matter of long-term care.

I am tempted to remember Viet Nam for its vast area of paddy fields, for its bicycles of every imaginable shape and size (surprisingly the British Hercules is regarded as the

Rolls-Royce of the road), for its seemingly endless and very wet "English" rain, as it is known locally, for the ubiquitous straw coolie hats unique to Viet Nam and for its own rather

special brand of aggressive mosquito. But these are surface impressions.

It will be the Viet Nameese themselves I shall remember, these delightful, humorous, good looking, sincere and intelligent people and their genuine desire for help.

After more than 30 years of war it is not surprising that their priorities have not included the disabled. They have been more concerned with survival and attempting to deal with some of the consequences of the war, many of which have still to emerge. The extensive use of the defoliant dioxin in central south Viet Nam for instance, seems to have created horrific genetic disabilities.

The quality of life for the severely disabled in Viet Nam is not measurable; it is not only intangible, it simply doesn't exist. But caring attitudes do, and there is no lack of love or concern.

Knowledge and materials are essential, and these will be the ingredients of a major project now being organised by the future Cerebral Palsy Overseas.

BENEFITS—HOW MEAN IS THE TEST

"It's not the poor who need to be tested," says Linda Avery.

Last month, reports appeared in the national press that the Conservative government was considering the introduction of a Comprehensive Disability Costs Allowance and Income Scheme, financed by means testing Child Benefit.

Although these reports were denied by Hugh Rossi, Minister for the Disabled, they have resurrected debate about whether the allocation of benefits should be universally or selectively based. But is the debate focussing on the right issues?

Traditionally, universal benefits have been exemplified by the family allowance, a cash benefit paid at fixed rates regardless of the income of the recipient. A person falls into the "universal" category when his need is officially recognised, and he is paid an "adequate" income as of "right," without taking into consideration any other financial resources he has.

"Selective" benefits are associated with an income, or means, test. Benefit is

decreased as income rises, and vice versa. Given the inequalities which exist in our society, it might seem strange that pressure groups and members of the poverty lobby have consistently supported universal benefits. But they offer extensive advantages.

They avoid the use of means tests which reduce take up, increase complexity, increase bureaucracy and, in many cases, impose a stigma on those clients who are forced to resort to means-tested benefits. Worse still, as means tests proliferate, the poverty trap deepens: a small rise in income often means a larger drop in available benefits.

There are also "political" advantages attached to universal benefits. It is argued, for example, that they increase the incentive to work since they are deducted from supplementary benefit but awarded to the low paid tax free.

Conversely, selectivists argue that universal benefits and services provided as of right to everyone, are pitifully low. Social security leaves millions in poverty with no other

income on which to rely. Also, the universal principle of equal benefits for all, irrespective of financial need, has the effect of sustaining an ever-increasing social inequality. So it is then, that the rich become richer leaving the poor in poverty.

How then can we justify universal benefits? First, a benefit which may be called "universal" at the point of payment, may not remain universal at all stages. If a universal benefit is taxed as earned income its value will vary according to the level of income tax paid. Even if the benefit is not taxed, its relative value may vary because, say, a £5 per week benefit is probably of more value to someone earning £40 a week than to someone earning £200. Indeed, for the benefit to be truly universal, the person earning £200 ought to get £28 to equalise the value!

If we also remember that "universal benefits" include the blanket provision of health, welfare and education services, it can be said that some will use them more or less than others.

All universal benefits are, to some extent selective.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, selective benefits fail to alleviate poverty. Selective benefits work on the principle of attacking poverty by giving most to those in need. But this has been far from successful because of the low take up rate. Pride, the shame of pleading poverty, lack of clear information, ignorance about entitlement and the difficulty of making claims, have all been used to explain the failure to claim benefit. Attention has concentrated on individual shortcomings — claimants lack education or intelligence.

These discussions divert attention from questions about the organisation and functions of means-tested schemes in society. We should be considering why it is necessary to devise schemes which can be understood or managed — often inefficiently — only by the well-educated. Why are such schemes based on rules which assume that incomes and social conditions are stable and that the opportunities to obtain

paid employment are uniform?

Fundamentally, the answer to these questions, and the major indictment against selective benefits, is historical. Policy since the 1834 Poor Law has been governed by the conflict inherent in means tested benefits and services, between alleviating poverty and exerting social control.

Essentially, means tested benefits and services ration and control; they reflect values of self-help and thrift approved by today's society, regardless of whether an individual has access to resources. They emphasise income — if you are rich you are good; if you are poor, you are bad, inadequate, irresponsible or immoral. Consequently various forms of coercion are used to impose conditions on recipients. They may be harassed by investigators and their private lives exposed to scrutiny.

As a rule, means tested schemes are used to relieve some of the "deserving" very poor — for as short a time as possible — and to prevent the "undeserving" from

gaining access to the system.

Thus successive governments have sought to keep down the income redistribution involved in social security.

Universal benefits are certainly preferable to those which are highly selective. However, the universal principle operates fairly only when it is not superimposed on unequal incomes.

What is really needed is a system that operates universally at the point of payment, but is selective at the point of financing — perhaps by increasing the ceiling on National Insurance contributions.

Tomorrow's welfare state relies on today's planners. Rather than concentrating on what is, or is not, an acceptable minimum income, attention should be focussed on what is an acceptable maximum.

Certainly, universal benefits are hard to justify in a world of unequal incomes. In this writer's view, attacking universalism is not the cure. We should be attacking the causes of inequality.

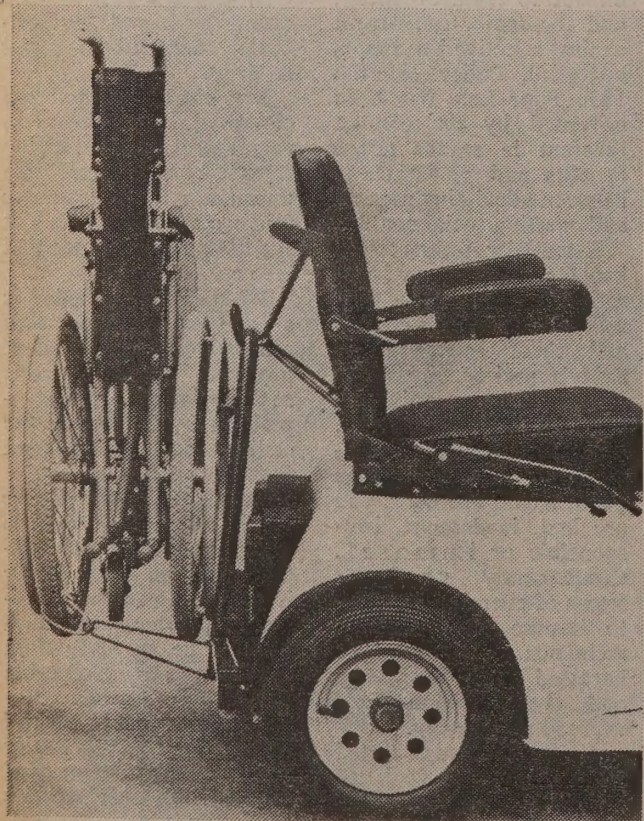
GETTING ABOUT ... in a wheel

AROUND 10,000 people visited a different kind of motor show last month. The Mobility Road Show, organised by the Department of Transport at its research laboratory in Berkshire, gave disabled people a chance to inspect and test the wide range of vehicles and adaptations that are now on the market. It was the first show of its kind, and much needed. As Sir Peter Baldwin, Chairman of PHAB, put it, 'Getting about unaided is one of the biggest obstacles disabled people wanting to lead an active and independent life have to overcome.' Among the 63 stands were many well-known wheelchair manufacturers, including Newton, The Spastics Society service to the disabled. You will find some of their latest ideas on this page.



At last the needs of disabled people travelling by air are being taken seriously, thanks to Access to the Skies UK, an independent organisation of air carriers, equipment makers and rehabilitation agencies. Scandinavian Airlines System (SAS) was the first carrier to equip its fleet with moveable aisle arm rests. KLM, The Royal Dutch Airline, has committed itself to supplying accessible lavatories and foldable aisle arm rests on some seats in its new aircraft, eg the A310 from Airbus Industrie, and to modifying where possible existing aircraft. Air Canada is phasing in a Japanese slim-line wheelchair and TWA and Pacific Western Airways have taken delivery of on-board wheelchairs.

Streamliner, above, is used by Saudi Arabian Airlines and is being considered by others. When the 20in wheels are detached, the chair becomes only 14in wide, and it folds to 4½in wide to fit under a seat. With folding backrests and detachable arms, it costs £185 from Newton, The Spastics Society service to the disabled, Meadway Works, Garretts Green Lane, Birmingham B33 0SQ.



Above: A wheelchair carrier which can be attached to the seat back of all new and most existing Batricar or Batrichair models. It doubles as a wheeled shopping trolley carrier. Price, £31.50.



Above: Chair-Up solves the problem of how to get a wheelchair in and out of the car. The wheelchair travels, folded, inside a weatherproof cover on a special roof rack. A simple electric winch unit lowers it alongside the driver when needed. The driver just pulls a cord and unclips the chair. After use, the chair goes back on the roof. Price, £650, which includes factory fitting. Further information from Chair-Up Ltd, The Lawn, Lower Row, Holt, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 7DZ.



The Rollite chair from Ortomed Aids (UK) is light — just under 30lb — and now comes with quick release wheels for easy lifting and stowing. Price, £203.



Disabled drivers can feel more confident if they have this eye-catching yellow pennant handy in case of a breakdown. It has been approved by the Department of Transport £3.80 (including postage) from the makers, Cleveland Spastic Work and Welfare Centre, Acklam Road, Middlesbrough, Cleveland TS5 4EG.

How to choose

A wheelchair is one of the most essential pieces of equipment a disabled person may need, so the model must be as comfortable and adaptable as possible. Whether you are considering buying a wheelchair or obtaining one through the DHSS, you should get in touch with an occupational therapist through your local Social Services Department, school, centre or hospital for an individual assessment and further help and advice. As a preliminary to this, you might like to do some independent research. The following points, although by no means exhaustive, may serve as a useful guide.

1. How is the chair to be used?

Comfort is a priority for prolonged periods spent in the chair; ease of transfer if frequent movement to car, wc, bed, other chairs is necessary.

2. Where is the chair to be used?

Think carefully about whether the chair will be used indoors only, outdoors only, a mixture of both, at home, or at work, and make sure the dimensions and accessories to the chair match up with the user's requirements. Various types of collapsible, desk, sports and indoor/outdoor chairs are available. Ease of manoeuvrability and transport are important.

3. Who will operate the chair?

The user may be able to propel him/herself either with one or both hands, one or both feet, or may require an electric chair operated by hand, foot, chin or breath. Otherwise attendant-operated manual or power-assisted models are available. Pay particular attention to the accessibility of the controls and how easy it is to operate them, especially if the chair is to be attendant-operated. Make sure it will not be too cumbersome or heavy for the attendant to manage.

4. What size, weight and shape is the user?

Check that seat width and depth, and back height correspond and that there is a comfortable distance between the seat and footplates. Make sure a child's chair can be adjusted as he or she grows.

5. How hard-wearing is the chair?

Check the durability of upholstery, mechanical parts and tyres.

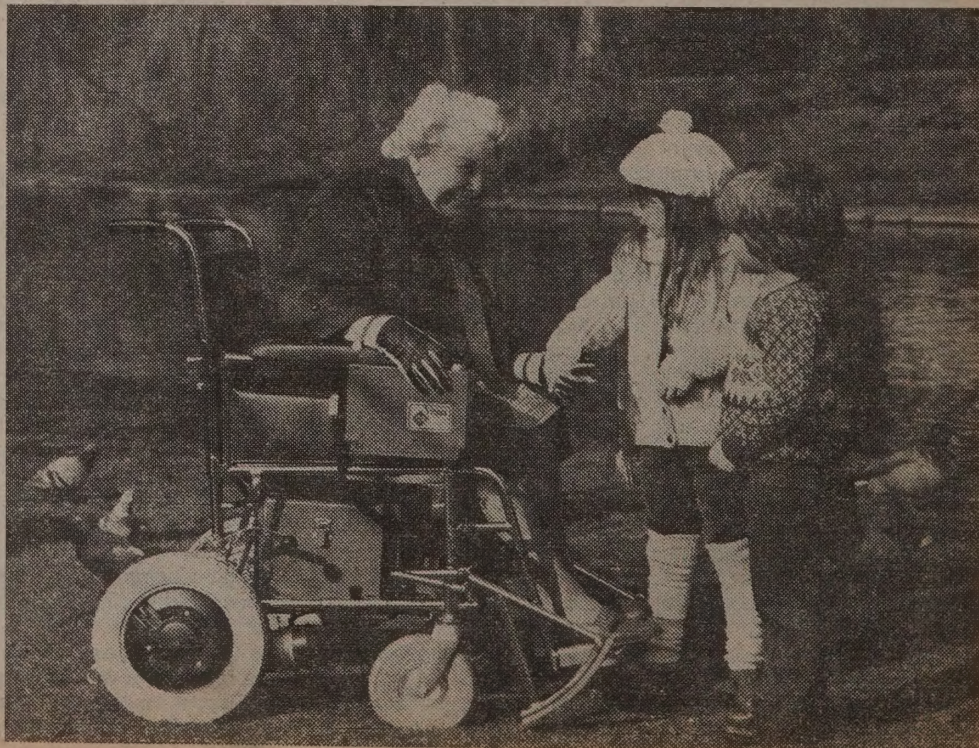
6. Where can it be repaired?

DHSS-supplied wheelchairs are maintained free of charge. If purchasing a chair privately, make sure parts are obtainable and inexpensive and there is a local agent with efficient servicing arrangements.

Below: Latest in the Vessa Vitesse series of power-chairs are the 111 models incorporating many new features, including a two-speed proportional controller and a "gear" selector switch. In four seat widths, complete with kerb climber, and with a choice of controller position, the Vitesse costs £1,375.

Esso service

Esso Petroleum has pioneered a service to disabled drivers. The Esso Service Station Address List, prepared for the Greater London Association for the Disabled, lists in convenient geographical sections



chair

wheelchair

What accessories are available?

Some armrests make getting in and out of a chair an armlock is preferable to prevent them being pulled away by accident. Some armrests fit under tables, some swing-away, detachable footrests are more useful. Body support systems help those who need extra support. A reclining back and elevated footrests help people who cannot change position to rest or have their legs changed. A cushion helps prevent pressure particularly when people cannot change position and a wide range is available. A tray for meals, books.

Which manufacturer?

Companies are given in alphabetical order: BEC, Everest and Jennings, Meyra Rehab, Spastics Vessa. These manufacturers produce a wide range of models and distribute through agents up and down the country. Contact your Social Services Department or Aids Centre (see below) for information on local suppliers.

Where can I see wheelchairs?

At your nearest Aids Centre it will be possible to see and choose from a selection from the wide range of wheelchairs. You should contact either The Society's Aids Centre or the Joint Aids Centre Committee Disabled Living Foundation, 346 Kensington Road, London W14 8NS (telephone: 01-602 2491) for details of your nearest Aids Centre.

How much do I have to pay for a wheelchair?

Wheelchairs (including powered chairs) and hand propelled tricycles are provided by the DHSS for people who have a permanent need for one. You could see your local GP or hospital consultant for advice and send an application to the local Artificial Limb Centre (ALAC) for you. ALAC will then assess and supply you with the most suitable.

Indoor user-operated electric wheelchairs are not available through the DHSS although it is possible to hire or purchase through Motability.

If you would like to know more about wheelchairs and equipment, please contact the Visiting Aids Office, 16 Fitzroy Square, London W1P 5HQ (telephone: 01-387 9571).

For disabled drivers

Stations all over the country where operators are helping disabled people. You can recognise these stations by its blue and white wheelchair symbol displayed in the shop window or elsewhere. Booklet is free from

The Greater London Association for the Disabled, 11 Thorpe Close, London W10 5XL, or from RADAR (The Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation), 25 Mortimer Street, London W1N 8AB.



One of Meyra Rehab's new range of folding, self-propelled and transit wheelchairs. The 3.600 Standard model has detachable and height adjustable leg-locks which swing to one side to allow someone to stand up and walk away more easily. The armrests are also detachable and there is a choice of four seat widths. £82.



Alice hears how to make the perfect cottage garden from the representative of Torbay Parks Department. Do they rent flower cottages too in the "English Riviera?"

ALICE AT CHELSEA

Continued from page 1
Along the road in search of refreshments. Alice caught sight of an ice cream van. "When I'm out on my own I get an ice-cream," she said. "It's easier than a cup of coffee." Able-bodied people take their services for granted.

The refreshment tent was set back from the road and there was no way Alice could have negotiated the kerb without help. Nor was it easy for her to choose food from the high counter or pass up her money.

Alan Sawyer, Shows Manager for the Royal Horticultural Society, is aware of the ramp problem. "It would need a ramp of at least 18in and the vehicles going round that road would destroy the ramps in no time."

Next we saw the toilets for the disabled. "It was murder before they came," said a St John's Ambulance man. The portable lavatories were designed with the help of the Disabled Living Foundation. We skipped a queue of able-bodied people waiting to use them.

Alice was impressed with the space, the hand-rails and the permanent look of them. "None of those rocky old Elsans." But there was a ridge outside which was difficult to negotiate. "I'll have to take a run at it." Alan Sawyer has promised to

Alice had her eye on the enormous "beefsteak" tomatoes. "All you need is a Fison's Gro-bag, a couple of plants, and some Tomorite," said the representative.

look into this for next year.

"We like to have suggestions from individuals and organisations," he said. "But this is only a temporary event, so we can't offer the same facilities as, say, Wisley."

We talked to the supervisor at the main gate, congratulating him on the help shown to disabled people. As we talked, a nurse stormed up. She wanted to complain about the facilities. "It's dreadful. Our group of patients have spent £7 each to come. They've a right to see the flowers. There are no wheelchair facilities. It's muddy and my chair is getting stuck. People have been so rude..." As Alan Sawyer said, with the world-weariness of a professional organiser: "You can't win them all."



NEW LONDON TAXI

The London cab, now 25 years old, is to be replaced by a more up-to-date design based on the Range Rover.

Spurred on by the International Year of Disabled People, the Department of Transport has been co-operating with Carbodies Ltd of Coventry, manufacturers of the London taxi, to produce a model suitable for a wheelchair passenger.

The prototype has a wider door and a lower floor, and the door hinging is reversed to make access to the seat easier.

The partition between the driver and passenger compartments is adjustable to allow extra space for a wheelchair. Ramps are carried on the vehicle.

Prototype trials in Peterborough and Newcastle upon Tyne have revealed that extra headroom and space for manoeuvre are still needed. Some more trials are planned.

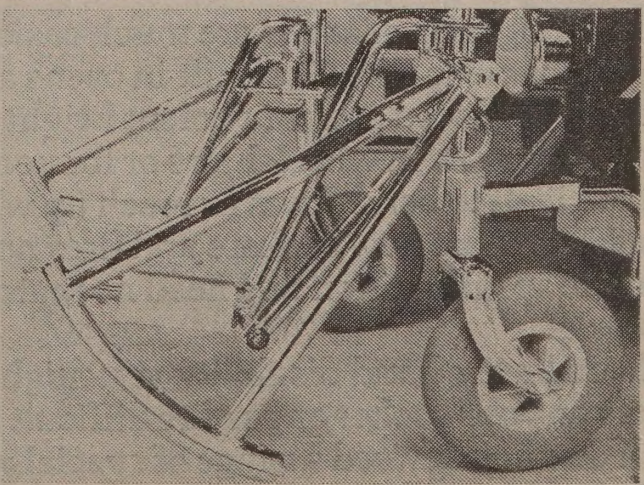
The new taxi will start appearing on the London streets in January 1985. If 10,000 taxis are to be replaced at the rate of 40 a week, how long will the changeover take?



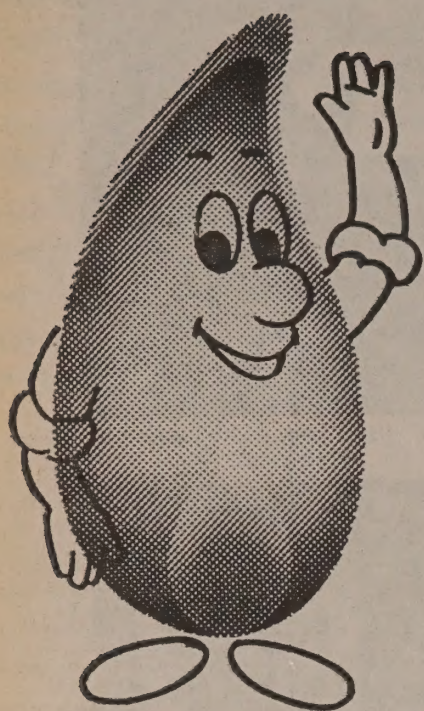
"I grew it myself, didn't I?" "Did you, dear?" asked a passerby, admiringly.



Excellent toilet facilities were marred by a ridge outside the door.



The new, smooth-action Kerb Rider attachment for Carter's powered wheelchairs, can climb a 5in kerb carrying someone weighing up to 220lbs. Price, £68.55 if ordered with a new chair; otherwise, £99.95.



"HELP FOR THE ELDERLY AND DISABLED."

British Gas offers a wide range of help to those who need it most, particularly the elderly and disabled.

If you are elderly or disabled, here are some of the ways in which we can make life easier for you. If you know somebody who might benefit from these services, please pass the information to them.

FREE GAS SAFETY CHECKS

A free gas safety check on your gas appliances and installations is available if: *You are 65 or over and you live alone; You are a registered handicapped person of any age and you live alone.*

This free check includes any necessary adjustments as well as materials up to the cost of £2.50 (including VAT). You might have to pay for any additional work that needs to be done.

SERVICING AND LEAKS

Gas fires, water heaters and central heating systems all need servicing from time to time. All customers can be assured that their appliances are operating safely and efficiently if they have them serviced regularly by competent people.

You should also bear in mind that checking and making safe a suspected gas leak is FREE for all customers. Simple gas leak repairs — which can be completed within half an hour — will also usually be free. If you suspect a gas leak at home or in the street, report it at once. The phone is quickest — call the emergency number for your area, under "GAS" in the local telephone directory.

AIDS FOR THE DISABLED

Modern gas appliances are much easier for disabled people to use. Gas built-in ovens and hot-plates can be placed at a convenient height in the kitchen for people in wheelchairs or for people who find it difficult to bend down or reach up when they are cooking. Most new cookers and fires now have automatic spark ignition and need no matches to light them.

If you have a hand disability, you might find the controls on your cooker or gas fire difficult to operate. British Gas has devised a range of special adaptors which should make life easier. There are four types of

tap handles specially designed for cookers, each of which will fit many different models, and tap adaptors for many gas fires.

There is a nominal standard charge of £2 (plus VAT) per appliance for supplying and fitting adaptors to a new or existing appliance.

If you know someone who is blind or has failing sight, please tell them about braille controls for cookers and central heating. The clock controls which switch central heating on and off can be brailled. Special braille or studded oven thermostat dials are available for most gas cookers, together with braille cooking charts.

ASK US TO HELP YOU

British Gas has a team of Home Service Advisers, who will call on disabled people at home and provide free advice on the use of gas. They can provide information about special adaptors and handles and advise on the choice of suitable appliances.

If you would like to contact the Home Service Advisers or to enquire about free gas safety checks, regular servicing for appliances or aids for the disabled, visit your local gas showroom or telephone the gas service centre (the phone number is under "GAS" in the local directory).

PAYING FOR GAS

The showroom can also tell you about easier ways to pay your gas bills, and how to get help if there is real hardship — ask for the Code of Practice, "Electricity and gas bills for your home."

BRITISH GAS



DOWNHILL RACER

Valerie Lang goes to the Austrian Tyrol
with The Society's Uphill Ski Club

Five years ago I went to the Italian Alps with the delightfully named Uphill Ski Club, a charity affiliated to The Spastics Society.

Although I came away knowing that I was too old — and too frightened of hurting myself — to learn to ski, I was deeply impressed with what the club was achieving. It did not set out to produce expert skiers, but skiers who though disabled, mostly with cerebral palsy, could experience freedom of movement on snow.

People who had real difficulty in walking not only skied, but in some cases walked more steadily at the end of the week than before. Moreover, there was a great deal of enjoyment: young people had the thrill of succeeding at something new.

This year I tried another Uphill Ski Club Holiday. We went to St Johann in the Austrian Tyrol. I was going to try ski-bobbing, said to be much easier. As the holiday approached my trepidation grew.

In fact it was fun. A ski-bob looks rather like a bicycle with skis substituted for wheels. Bobbers are furious if one refers to a "bob" as a "bike," but that is the easiest way to describe it. It has two short skis, one behind the other. A saddle is mounted on the rear one, and handle bars on the front one. The front ski can be turned like the front wheel of a bicycle. One sits quite low to the ground, using one's feet, shod with "plates" (very short skis) to help with balancing and steering.

Riding a ski-bob is easier than riding a bicycle because one can keep one's feet on the ground. That is not to say that I found it easy; being an athetoid, balance has never come easily to me, even on my own two feet. Nevertheless, I was soon able to ride down gentle slopes by myself. For the first four days most of my attempts

to ride ended with me on the ground, my legs still entangled. The more expert helpers became adept at picking me up in such a way that I was still on the bob! By the fifth day, I had almost mastered the technique of righting myself before I hit the ground, and by the sixth, I was able to complete a gentle slalom course without falling off.



"The choice appeared to be between full speed and stop." Valerie coming down on the ski-sledge.

Some of the people I saw as beginners in 1978 are now quite advanced skiers, going on ski runs high up the mountain, and beginning to complain that the "helpers," as opposed to the professional instructors, cannot keep up with them.

Others, who have greater handicaps belong to the "outrigger group." The outriggers are elbow-crutches, mounted on mini-skis. They give confi-

dence to people who normally walk with great difficulty and who would otherwise find terrifying the wilful movement of skis on snow.

Bobs are one stage further on from outriggers, for people who cannot pluck up courage to ski, even with outriggers.

Last year's ski-bobber, Edmund Smart, needed no help this year and rela-

tively little instruction. I, on the other hand, being much less steady, needed a great deal of help and instruction. Nevertheless, I found it less frightening because I was closer to the ground. I only hurt myself once, and not seriously, the whole week.

A party of Austrian paraplegic winter sportsmen, staying in another hotel, were using sledges mounted on skis. I took one look at a sledge and



IN the heart of the Austrian Tyrol, St Johann nestles below the Wildenkaiser.

decided that I had found my true winter sport!

The following day, Brian Thomas, one of the instructors, took me to investigate. No sooner did we arrive, than a sledge was offered as a loan for the afternoon. Brian helped me in, showed me the controls, and offered to take me up the mountain.

It looked an awfully long way up the tow. I was not sure that I could remember to pull the left hand lever when I wanted to turn right and the right hand lever to turn left.

Brian saw my hesitation and offered to give me a short practice run. He manhandled the sledge up the slope for about 20 yards, reminded me of the controls, and sent me on my way. I steered to the bottom with no problems and was ready to try a longer run. Together we went up the tow, he on his skis ahead of me, and I, in the sledge, hitched to the T-bar.

It was a much longer tow than I had ever been on before, something like half a mile. Once at

the top, there was only one way to come down. I did remember, most of the time, which lever to pull. On the few occasions when I pulled the wrong one, I managed to correct myself before we quite left the piste (ski-run). My only problem was that I could not make the ski-sledge go slowly. To do that, one has to make very tight turns, moving almost horizontally across the mountain slopes. The choice appeared to be between full-speed and stop. Mercifully the slopes were almost empty. We reached the bottom of the mountain safely.

Brian had tied a rope to the back of the ski-sledge so that he could act as brake-man in an emergency, but fortunately he was not called upon to do so. We came down rather faster than he had expected. Altogether we made three runs that day, and three on the following afternoon. Now I can look forward to the Uphill Ski Club acquiring its own ski-sledge.

This year the club ran

a total of four weeks skiing holidays divided between two resorts in Austria. In 1978 one small party went for a week's skiing in Italy. It has made amazing progress.

Uphill Ski Club

The Uphill Ski Club runs one and two-week ski holidays in the Austrian Tyrol for disabled people over the age of 12. Anyone with a motor disability is eligible and some places are available for people with mental handicaps.

There are professional instructors, doctors and experienced helpers. Travel is by Supersnowcoach to and from London.

Prices (1982-3): £170 for one week, £265 for two weeks which includes travel, full board, hire of equipment, ski tuition and full holiday insurance. Contact Susan Hawkins, 12 Park Crescent, London W1N 4EQ. (Tel: 01-636 1989).

"A ski-bob looks rather like a bicycle with skis substituted for wheels. Very short skis are worn on the feet to help with balancing and steering."



Patient understanding

IF you have ever felt, during a visit to your local GP, that perhaps the doctor isn't really interested in what you think or feel, then a new move by the Royal College of General Practitioners (the RCGP) will be welcome news indeed.

The RCGP has started the year with the establishment of a new Patient Liaison Group. Initially the group is based at the college, but it is hoped that before long regional groups will follow.

The group follows a working group of the RCGP's communications division, which suggested that the new group might send representatives to

other RCGP committees to voice the patients' point of view, as well as initiating areas for discussion by the RCGP as a whole.

It is hoped that eventually these patient representatives will be able to play an active role in encouraging better patient-doctor liaison at local levels, with a possible further expansion of the future group's activities into GP training or hospital involvement.

Patient representatives are being selected from nominations by the Association of Community Health Councils in England and Wales, and will form the group with an equal number of representatives from the RCGP.

Straws without wind

THERE are a variety of disabilities which prevent a person from drinking from a cup or tumbler. Often the only way to drink unaided is through a straw.

The problem is that each time you suck through a straw, you draw up a column of air before the liquid reaches the mouth. A mug of tea may involve six or more columns of air, all of which goes into the stomach. A normal day's consumption of liquid can result in a large amount of air being drawn into the stomach; at best causing dyspepsia, and at worst accumulating in the chest cavity and causing danger to a weak heart.

A simple new invention,

the Pat Saunders Straw, helps to overcome these problems. A small valve holds the level of liquid near the top of the straw after the initial intake of liquid, so that the shaft of the straw does not fill with air again.

The straw can be sterilised and re-used in hospitals, or cleaned daily at home. It may be used for hot or cold drinks, including mildly acid citrus drinks. A conservative estimate of the straw's life is approximately six months.

£1.50 per pack for two straws, one 7in and one 10in, in a plastic container. Packs of 50 are available for hospitals.

Hospital and private

orders to Nottingham Medical Aids Ltd, 17 Lublow Hill Road, Melton Road, West Bridgeford, Nottingham NG2 6HD. Hospital orders only to Bayer UK Ltd, BMT Products, Burrell Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 1TP.

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Sole Distributors for Vessa Ltd's range of Power and Hand-Propelled Wheelchairs in the Midlands, Powys, Avon and Somerset. Also Everest & Jennings Distributors and BEC & Batrac Agents. All these makes are available on 'Motability' HP, to recipients of the Mobility Allowance. Write for details and colour brochures.
FREEPOST, Birmingham B25 8BR. Tel 021 772 5364 or Ashley Mobility (Worcester) FREEPOST, Worcester WR4 9BR. Tel 28575 or Ashley Mobility, FREEPOST, Weston super Mare, Avon BS23 3BR. Tel 26011.

HOLIDAY SPECIALLY FOR THE DISABLED

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Full details from
The Disabled Travellers
Club Ltd

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Derbyshire.

WHAT'S ON

INSIDE THE SOCIETY

Anti-Discrimination legislation one day conferences are to be held on the following dates:—

Wales, June 25, Sully Work Centre, Hayes Road, Sully, nr Barry, S. Glamorgan. Contact Moi Pritchard 0222 30749.

North West, July 2, Lime Court Daycentre, West Derby Road, Liverpool 6. July 9, Venue to be arranged in Manchester. Contact David Hanson 061 832 6373.

Eastern, July 16, Oliver Wells School, Farnborough, Netherfield, Milton Keynes, MK6 4HG. Contact Penny Rigby 046 26 71911.

London, July 21, Westminster Conference Centre, Morpeth Terrace, London SW1. Contact Anne Murphy 01 387 9571.

Midlands, September 3, Norfolk Hotel, Hagley Road, Birmingham. Contact Mrs Alma Hill 09222 34949.

North East, Contact Sue Smith 0385 62127 (to be arranged).

South East, Contact Chris Rutherford 029 347 1211 (to be arranged).

Single Study Day on "Performing Investigations on Children" will be held by the Medical Education and Information Unit on Wednesday, July 6, 1983, in the Tower Lecture Theatre at Guy's Hospital, London, from 10.00 am to 3.30 pm approx. Cost £6 to include registration and refreshments. Application forms, returnable by June 24, 1983 are available from Mrs D. Patterson, MEIU Secretary, Newcomen Centre, Guy's Hospital, St Thomas Street, London SE1 9RT. Telephone 01 407 7600 Ext 3632.

Star Show Jumping at Ascot, Sunday, July 10, 1983. A family day out in aid of The Spastics Society. Not to be missed. Events for the day include appearances by star riders Harvey and Robert Smith, Graham Fletcher, Lionel Dunning, Malcolm Pyrah, Liz Edgar, Pam Dunning, Jean Germany and many more. Also Pony Club events, Country Fair, Food and Bars, Fun Fair, and Riding for the Disabled, featuring "Rags" the "Blue Peter" Pony. Admission price on the day £1.50 adults, free for children under 14. Free parking for all!

The Spastics Society Disability Benefits Conference will be held at the Westminster Conference Centre, Morpeth Terrace, London SW1, on Wednesday, July 20, 1983. Details of programme, fees and facilities from Linda Avery or Sharon St Michael at 12 Park Crescent, London W1N 4EQ. Telephone 01-636 5020.

The ICA/HNCIP Steering Group is organising Days of Action in July as part of the campaign to end discrimination against married women in eligibility for Invalid Care Allowance and Housewives Non-Contributory Invalidity Pension. It is hoped that on July 8 and 9 people will lobby in the constituencies, and on July 13 there will be a press conference in Parliament. The Spastics Society is involved with 50 other organisations. The Steering Group has produced an information/lobbying pack for those who would like to take part in the campaign. It is free, but donations would be welcome. Contact Amanda Jordan, The Spastics Society, 12 Park Crescent, London W1N 4EQ.

A Half Marathon in aid of The Spastics Society will be held at Windsor Great Park on Sunday, October 9, 1983, starting at 1.00 pm. Age limits for competitors 16 to 65 years. Entrance fee £3.50 plus two first class postage stamps. Forms available from Mrs Alysia Hunt, Race Director, 5 The Acre, Victoria Street, Windsor, Berkshire SL4 1ER. Telephone Windsor 57970.

"Working Towards Integration," the joint Spastics Society and ACE day conference on Parents and the 1981 Education Act, will take place on Thursday, July 7, 1983 at the University of London Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL.

A circular from the Department of Education and Science to Local Education Authorities said: "In looking at the child as a whole person, the involvement of the child's parent (in the assessment process) is essential."

The conference will examine the role of parents since the 1981 Education Act, and how great a part they can expect to play. Details from ACE, 18 Victoria Park Square, London E2 9PB. Cost £12.00 per head.

REGIONS

Annual Open Day, Buxton Centre, Derbyshire, Saturday, June 18, 1983, 10.00 am to midday and 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm.

Annual Summer Fete, Grangewood Centre, Essex, Saturday, June 18, 1983.

Priory School CP Games, Weston-Super-Mare, Saturday, June 18, 1983.

Wheelchair Dance, Cheltenham, Saturday, June 18, 1983. **Garden Party, Kingston Adult House Unit**, Surrey, Saturday, June 18, 1983.

North East Regional Conference, University of York, Saturday, July 2, 1983, title "Making the Most of Life." Details from NE Regional Office, Royal Chambers, Station Parade, Harrogate, N. Yorkshire, before June 20, 1983.

Calvert Trust activity weekend, Lake District, July 15-17, 1983 — inquiries to NE Region Office (address above).

Ron Cottrell's exhibition of model cars and car club badges is to be displayed at the Jaguar Drivers' Club's "Southern Jaguar Day" at Leeds Castle, Hollingbourne, near Maidenhhead, Kent, on Sunday, July 24, 1983. Details from Ron Cottrell, 87 Cedar Road, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 2JN.

Garden Fete and Summer Draw, Brighton and Hove District, "Helping Hands" group fund raising day. Thursday, July 21, 1983, at Hamilton House, 69 Wilbury Avenue, Hove, BN3 6GH. Toys, gifts and bric-a-brac wanted. Draw tickets now on sale from Hamilton House, counterfoils to be returned by July 13. Telephone Brighton 778228.

STARS ORGANISATION FOR SPASTICS

SOS Cycling Marathon from Maidenhead to Birmingham, Sunday, June 19, 1983. Tim Rice will fire the starting pistol to set 100 cyclists, each sponsored for at least £30, on a 30-mile ride from The Crest Hotel, Maidenhead at 11.00 am. At the four staging posts, cyclists will be greeted by celebrities including Simon Williams, Jack Howarth, Patrick Cargill, Sylvia Syms, Lucy Fleming, Doris Hare and Margaretta Scott, who will also be selling raffle tickets and autographs. The raffle first prize is a racing bicycle donated by Raleigh. Crest Hotels have also donated holiday weekend prizes, and are providing the competitors' refreshments. Many of the riders are Crest Hotel staff from all over the country.

Wakes Hall Open Day, Colchester, Essex, Sunday, June 26, 1983.

Colwall Court Open Day, Bexhill, Sussex, Thursday, July 7, 1983.

Charity Gala Evening at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-Upon-Avon, Sunday, July 17, 1983. Proceeds in aid of SOS and the Stratford Festival Fund.

The cast includes: Leslie Crowther, David Kossoff, Stephanie Lawrence, Peggy Mount, Tim Rice, B. A. Robertson, magician Terry Seabrooke, and The Bouncing Czecks. Directed by Tommy Shaw, Director of Movement to the English National Opera at the Coliseum. Tickets are available from the Festival Office, Stratford-Upon-Avon.

Greyhound Race Meeting at Brighton & Hove Stadium, Saturday, July 30, 1983.

ABROAD

International "Art and Leisure" Exhibition 1983, is to be held at the Raymond Poincare Hospital at Garches, France, from October 1-9, 1983. It is open to all physically handicapped people, and personnel who work with them. Categories for exhibitors are sculpture, ceramics, models, painting, handicrafts and photography. Full details and entry forms from Georges Ricci, 22 rue Paul Bert, 92140 Clamart. Tel: 642 89 25.

OBITUARY

Jack Rubie, FRCP, MD, DCH, died on May 2. He was a paediatrician who pioneered research into tubercular meningitis and rickets among children. He was a consultant to the Ravenswood Foundation for mentally handicapped children, the Thalidomide Trust and eight other hospitals.

Dr Leslie Gardner writes: In addition to his practice in Harley Street, at Great Ormond Street, and various hospitals in the Home Counties, Dr Rubie also found time to serve with The Society's Assessment Panel from its early days at Guy's Hospital to its more recent work at Fitzroy Square; with social workers, therapists, psychologists and other colleagues.

The many thousands of families who have brought their children to the Assessment Panel will remember the care and concern with which he carried out his work which started in the late 1950's, when "spasticity" was still a relatively unknown and little understood condition.

In those early days he quickly acquired an exper-

tise in diagnosis and the planning of treatment that was second to none. His approach was always kindly, practical and realistic, aimed at ensuring that parents understood there was no cure for conditions such as cerebral palsy, but that much could and must be done to alleviate the difficulties and to get round many of the obstacles through therapy, education and the use of aids, combined with sheer common sense.

Many parents will remember asking: "Will my child ever walk?" Dr Rubie was able, after his expert assessment, to reassure some that all would be well. To others he would have to say: "He will never walk as you and I walk. But with two tripods he will eventually get round the sitting-room, slowly but surely..."

This realistic advice, to parents who were often extremely anxious about their child's future, was always conveyed with kindness — the hallmark of Jack Rubie's work. His guidance will be much missed by colleagues and families alike.

OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

A National Exhibition of Aids for Disability will be held at the Bingley Hall Exhibition Centre in Birmingham, July 7-9. It will coincide with the Bingley Hall Bonanza Day for disabled people and their families, now in its third year, which takes place on July 9. The West Midlands Council for Disabled People support the enterprise.

Water Recreation for Disabled People is the topic of a seminar to be held by The Centre on Environment for the Handicapped in association with the BSAD Water Sports Division on Tuesday, July 19, 1983 at the National Star Centre for Disabled Youth, Cheltenham. Details and application forms available from CHE, 126 Albert Street, London NW1 7NF. Forms to be returned by July 1, 1983.

Computer enthusiasts will be glad to hear of the first "Computer Holiday for the Disabled" to be held from August 7 to 15, 1983 at the University of Southampton, subsidised by grants from the Department of Industry. More details from Computer Holidays, 37 University Road, Highfield, Southampton, SO2, 1TL. Telephone 0703 558621.

Access to the Skies, UK, the independent organisation which is working to improve air travel for disabled people, would like to hear from anyone who will be travelling from Terminal 3 at London Airport (Heathrow) using a wheelchair. The Airport Authority has agreed to allow someone to travel from the check-in point to the aircraft in the same

chair to test the facilities. Please contact Anne Cox at RADAR, 25 Mortimer Street, London W1N 8AB. Telephone 01-637 5400.

South Bucks Spastics Society wish to announce their new address as of June 1, 1983. Please send any correspondence to Seeley's House, Campbell Drive, Knotty Green, Beaconsfield, Bucks.

CLASSIFIEDS

For Sale

VESSA VITESSE WHEELCHAIR, almost new (bought March 1983). 14½ inch seat, Curb-climbers and safety belt. £900. Tel: Sandra Hogen 01 761 0136.

STANNAH HOME LIFT for sale — as new (only three months use). £1,000 ono — purchaser to collect from Norfolk address. Contact: Clare Rowe 01-701 5762 for further details.

VESSA WHEELCHAIR for sale — two years old, in good working order, with two new batteries. £600 ono. Contact: Mr Crossley, 7 Harefield West, Selby Road, Leeds LS15 0ES.

SLIDING, SWIVELLING, bucket car seat unit on a sliding steel platform, no longer needed. As new, £30. Telephone 0536 741209.

Housing

FOUR BEDROOMED BUNGALOW for sale, specially designed for a person in a wheelchair. Situated at Great Baddow, near Chelmsford, Essex. Price around £59,000. For more details, ring Colchester 48844.

HOUSING EXCHANGE — disabled person willing to exchange his one-bedroomed house for a two-bedroomed house — must have no steps. Contact: Mr Crossley, 7 Harefield West, Selby Road, —Leeds LS15 0ES.

New Friend

YOUNG MAN, aged 26 years, bright and intelligent, has pleasant looks and of smart appearance, wishes to meet interesting female companion for friendship, preferably living in or near South West England, but not essential. He is in permanent

employment, a car owner and suffers slightly from cerebral palsy, but is entirely independent. Photo appreciated. Write Box 110, Spastic News (Address on page 12).

Situation Wanted

YOUNG LADY aged 19½, mildly affected with cerebral palsy, leaving Business Studies College at the end of May, requires office work in the Bournemouth / Poole / Southampton area. She is able to drive and already has two years' experience of work in an accounts office. Please telephone Bournemouth 423710.

Send your small ads to the Editor, Spastics News, 12 Park Crescent, London W1N 4EQ.



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Conservative Manifesto

Continued from page 1

4. "Child benefit and one-parent benefit are to be raised in November to their highest-ever level in real terms. We have also improved the family income supplement scheme to help low-paid working families."

Comment: Good! But no mention of increasing the Maternity Grant which has been £25 since 1969. And no commitment to partial incapacity benefit or to the restoration of the 5 per cent abatement in the Invalidity Pension.

National Health Service

1. "The treatment of the elderly, the mentally handicapped and the mentally ill will continue to command our particular attention. We shall continue to make extra provision for those parts of the country in the North and the Midlands which have always been comparatively short of resources."

Comment: Good news. The perinatal mortality rate is more than twice as high in Cumbria as it is in Richmond/Kingston. We would have welcomed reference to the maternity services and handicap prevention.

2. "Helping people to stay in familiar surroundings is the aim of our policy 'Care in the Community'. The Government has given extra powers and extra cash to health authorities to enable them to finance such community care for individual patients on a long-term basis."

Comment: Policy is good, but the cash came out of existing joint-finance. No mention of future allocation of funds or of any development.

Jobs

"We shall help to make the job market more flexible and efficient so that more people can work part-time if they wish, and find work more easily." eg encourage part-time job release for those nearing retirement, and the job-splitting scheme—breaking one full-time job into two part-time jobs. The Conservatives say they will build on the existing network of information technology centres for the young unemployed.

Comment: More flexibility will certainly help disabled people in the job market. But no mention of unemployed disabled people specifically. In July 1982 17½ per cent of disabled people were unemployed compared with 13.8 per cent of the total workforce. And 50 per cent of them had been out of work for more than a year; that's double the figure for all unemployed people.

'Partnership in Care'

1. "We also welcome the vital contribution made by voluntary organisations in the social services. We shall continue to give them strong support. . . . The terms governing gifts under covenants have been much improved, and liability to capital taxation has been lightened or swept away."

Comment: Some help was given in the last Budget, but VAT remains. Local authorities, and others, can recover VAT on the services they provide under the 1972 Finance Act. Charities cannot. The Society estimates it will lose £500,000 to VAT in 1982/3.

2. "We shall continue to support our highly successful 'Opportunities for Volunteering' scheme. In the next Parliament, we shall develop other new ways to encourage more private giving."

Comment: Interesting!

Local Government Spending

"We shall legislate to curb excessive and irresponsible rate increases by high-spending councils, and to provide a general scheme for limitation of rate increases for all local authorities to be used if necessary."

Comment: Most disabled people rely heavily on support from local authority social services, and levels of expenditure are crucial if local authorities are to face their responsibilities under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act (1970).

Public Transport

"... the red tape (will be cut) which makes it so difficult for small firms and voluntary bodies to provide better ways to get around for those without cars, particularly the very old and the disabled."

Comment: Good!

Summary

A vague Manifesto, less specific than Labour or the Alliance. While there are several plans which we welcome, there is not enough mention of disabled people. What is more, there is nothing on implementing the 1981 Education Act, which promises integration of disabled children into ordinary schools, nor on anti-discrimination legislation. And are the Conservatives relying too much on economic recovery?

Merry Christmas!

The Spastics Society's new Christmas Card and Gifts Catalogue is now available, and includes many new items; in particular, new single design packs, over-printed with "Sold in aid of The Spastics Society

and its affiliated groups," and a new 20-card bargain pack for only £1.30, carrying a charity acknowledgment. Obtainable, free, from Spastics Cards Ltd, PO Box 66, Burton-on-Trent, Staffs DE14 3LQ.

TRACEY MEETS THE PRINCESS



Tracey De'Arth of Ingfield Manor School was one of the most important guests at The Royal World Charity Premiere of "Octopussy," the latest James Bond film, on June 6, 1983. At the start of the premiere at the Odeon, Leicester Square, Tracey presented a film programme to HRH The Prince of Wales, while Roger Moore's son, Christian, presented flowers to HRH The Princess of Wales.

Many celebrities were present, as well as the stars of "Octopussy," and Roger Moore himself. It was through Roger's influence as a Vice-President and former chairman of SOS, that the Stars Organisation for Spastics was given the opportunity to organise the premiere.

The proceeds of the evening, which are thought to be approximately £80,000, will be shared equally between SOS and The Royal School for the Blind at Leatherhead, the charity nominated through The Princess of Wales' Charities Trust.

BOOKS

Directory of Non-Medical Research Relating to Handicapped People 1982

by Jane Whiteley and Jim Sandhu
(The Handicapped Persons Research Unit, Newcastle upon Tyne Polytechnic, 1 Coach Lane, Coach Lane Campus, Newcastle upon Tyne NE7 7TW.) Paperback, £10 (including postage).

This presents a wide-ranging survey of current and recently completed research projects. The projects are indexed by subject, researchers and institutions.

The majority of projects are concerned with either physical or mental handicap — in roughly equal proportions — but there are also those which investigate aspects of autism, dyslexia, disfigurement, old age and other conditions which bring people into the general category of being handicapped.

This is a valuable tool for anyone who wants to know what research is being undertaken. It should help avoid duplication. Its usefulness will be increased if the compilers succeed in

their intention of producing further editions.

In the interests of simplifying the production, the book merely reproduces the forms which were returned by research workers. This means that the print is very small and the amount of detail provided is variable. Nevertheless, addresses are given in each case so that one can always write to the research worker to find out more.

Valerie Lang

Easy to Make Toys for your Handicapped Child

by Don Caston
(Souvenir Press. Hardback £7.95, Paperback £5.95). ANOTHER handbook from the Human Horizon Series and a companion volume to "Easy To Make Aids For Your Handicapped Child" by the same author.

Parents often find manufactured toys expensive and difficult to manipulate for the handicapped child. With the help of this book they can now make attractive and educational toys using easily-available, inexpensive materials and a few basic tools.

As the title suggests, no

carpentry skills are needed and there are detailed instructions and diagrams for 60 imaginative toys for children from infancy to the ages of 10-12.

There is a section on how to use the tools and if you have no workshop

the toys can be made on the kitchen table. So parents who have never tried to make anything can create toys which will give great pleasure to both parents and children.

Gwen Rose

Rifton

EQUIPMENT FOR THE HANDICAPPED



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Phoenix assured

Parents have been upset by the idea that the Phoenix Centre at Bromley may be closed.

The Centre, in the grounds of the Farnborough Hospital, was built by The Spastics Society to provide assessment, therapy and treatment for up to 30 cerebral-palsied children from birth to eight. In 1972 it was handed over to the Bromley Health Authority.

Earlier this year there were rumours that Sainsbury's had offered the Health Authority over £1 million for the Centre and adjoining land in order to build a home and garden super centre.

When the Friends of Phoenix Centre could obtain no satisfactory answer from the hospital or the Health Authority, they began mobilising.

In fact, there is no immediate threat to the Centre.

What is being planned is a District Handicap Team and Assessment Unit, one comprehensive provision for under-fives

which would be served by a multi-disciplinary team and jointly funded by Education, Health and Social Services. It would, of course, include children from the Phoenix Centre.

A consultative document from the Education Department has now been circulated.

Two meetings are being arranged. On June 29, Dr Jake Mackinnon, consultant paediatrician at Farnborough Hospital, hopes to organise a joint meeting between representatives of the hospital, the Health Authority, the Education Department, parents and The Spastics Society. And on July 1, Ann Hithersay, Director of Regions, and John Belcher, Director of Social Services, from The Society, will be meeting representatives of the Health Authority and the Education Department.

Everyone has the interests of the children at the Phoenix Centre at heart. It is a matter of working out how best to serve the handicapped children of Bromley in the future.

Save a Baby

New literature, designed to help prospective mothers to enter pregnancy fit and healthy, is being launched by The Spastics Society as part of the Save-a-Baby Campaign.

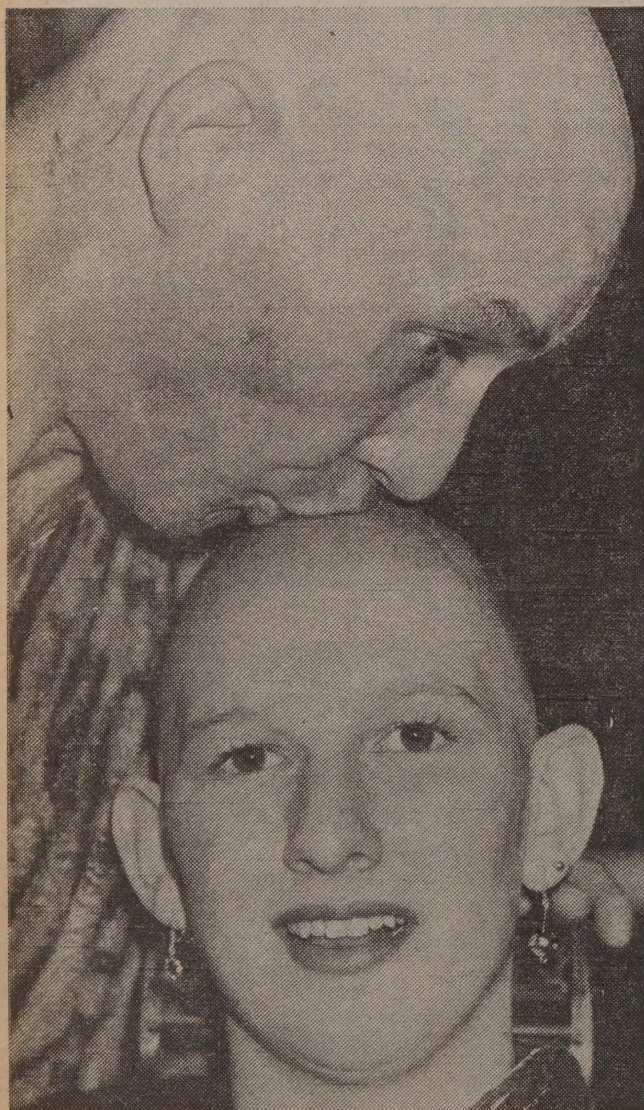
A new booklet about pre-pregnancy care, pregnancy and the early days of parenthood, will shortly be published.

The first three of a new series of fact sheets designed to show prospective mothers simple ways in

which they can give their baby the optimum chances of being born in perfect health, are now available. They are "Your Health — and Food," "Your Health — and Smoking," and also "A Guide on Benefits."

Both the booklet and the fact sheets are free to members of the public, on receipt of a large stamped self-addressed envelope, from The Information Department, The Spastics Society, 12 Park Crescent, London W1N 4EQ.

Nigel Wright



What some people will do for charity! Leon Gold and his wife Toni, mother of two, got the "Kojak" look at the Rocket public house in Acton in May, when they took part in a sponsored head shaving in aid of the Central Middlesex Spastics Society. Altogether eight people had their heads shaved. They raised £1,078.



Comedian Jimmy Edwards acted as delivery boy for a very special parcel on May 27. Lex Wilkinson, the distribution company which transports products from The Society's Newton works in Birmingham, was this time bringing something the other way — a £1,000 donation to The Society's workshop. Assembly worker, David Miles receives the giant cheque, while Malcolm Howard, Operations Director for Lex Wilkinson, looks on approvingly.

THINK POSITIVE

— says a new report on Continence

About 3 million people in Britain from all age groups suffer from incontinence. No more than 10 per cent receive any kind of specialist help. Yet 87 companies manufacture or market aids for incontinence, and the National Health Service alone spends an estimated £36 million a year on incontinence aids.

What must be galling to the sufferers is that they bear the stigma of being anti-social while society shows little interest in their problem beyond supplying the basic care of what has been called "the mop and bucket brigade."

There is a bewildering choice of equipment which has never been properly evaluated, and the quality of services fluctuates greatly from one area to another. The situation can be summed up as one of widespread confusion, ignorance and inconsistency.

This is the substance of a new report, "The Problem of Promoting Continence," produced by the Royal College of Nursing in association with Squibb Surgicare. Its findings are based upon a nationwide series of workshops which examined the resources available to nurses and others who care for the incontinent. Over 1,000 people took part.

Starting from the premise that "The need for continence is a basic human need", the report calls for a new and positive approach that emphasises prevention and improvement as much as care.

The report makes some specific recommendations. Among them are: multi-disciplinary teams within each new District Health Authority to explore and develop ways of alleviating the problems of incontinent people; a resource and information centre, at least

at Regional level; a working group to focus nationally on the problem; improved liaison between manufacturers and health care workers; and the formation of local pressure groups.

"There is an urgent need to establish a social policy for the care of incontinent people in Britain," declares the report. And it throws down the gauntlet not only to government health departments and statutory health authorities, but to professional and voluntary organisations, consumer representative organisations, political parties and community health councils, who are urged to organise and co-ordinate their pressure group activities.

On economic grounds alone, something must be done. For the elderly population is rising, and if prevention and products are not developed, the cost of caring will be a great drain on the National Health budget.

"The Problem of Promoting Continence" is available from Ren Publications Department, 20 Cavendish Square, London W1M 0AB (send SAE 10in x 7in).

SPASTICS NEWS

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The views expressed in Spastics News are not necessarily those of The Spastics Society.

Babes need Heinz

Babies living in the Bristol area will benefit from a computer which can monitor and analyse their progress once they have left the maternity unit at Southmead Hospital. The money for the computer came from the H. J. Heinz baby food label redemption

scheme which has raised many thousands of pounds for The Spastics Society's "Save a Baby" campaign. On June 6, Mrs Joyce Smith, Chairman of The Society, presented a cheque for £20,000 to Peter Dunn, Reader in Child Health and Perinatal Medicine at Bristol University.

Nicky Buck celebrates

Nicky Buck has just completed 25 years with Tube Investment Gas Spares. During a big dinner at the Europa Hotel in London he was welcomed into the company's 25 Year Club by Managing Director, John Duncan, who presented him with a carriage clock. Nicky received a tremendous ovation from everyone.

Production Director of Ascot Water Heaters, around the centre.

They stopped to watch Nicky sorting screws. Sometimes a screw fell on the floor. Nicky left it there. When the job was finished, Nicky got down and picked them all up.

"Why did you leave the screws on the floor?" asked Stan Stanbrook.



But the story does not end there. For Nicky has cerebral palsy and if it hadn't been for Bill Hargreaves he might never have got his job.

Nicky was working at Sherrards Industrial Training Centre at Welwyn, Hertfordshire, in 1952 when Bill Hargreaves, the new Industrial Liaison Officer for The National Spastics Society, was showing Stan Stanbrook, then

"You don't think I'm an idiot wasting all that energy picking them up one at a time?" retorted Nicky.

Stanbrook was so impressed with Nicky's intelligence that he offered him a job.

He did not regret it. Nicky's courage and determination has paid off. Now he's back at work. His next objective is the 40 Year Club!

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